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UNCLAS ATHENS 001892

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL MARR PINS GR
SUBJECT: GREEK PM CALLS FOR CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON/ISRAEL

REF: ATHENS 1842

This message is sensitive but unclassified, please handle accordingly.

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The Greek Prime Minister on July 19 called for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon and Israel, the unconditional release of all captive soldiers, the disarmament of paramilitary organizations, and assistance to civilians in the region. On July 18, the Foreign Minister also called for a ceasefire. Protests in front of the U.S. and Israeli embassies are growing larger each day, with 1000-1200 demonstrators expected on July 20. END SUMMARY.

PM CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE, CONDEMNS VIOLENCE

¶2. (U) In July 19 press conference, Greek PM Costas Karamanlis called for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon and Israel. He stressed, "this violence -- all violence -- is not distinguished good or bad. We condemn it completely, without hesitation, and categorically." Calling for six specific actions, he emphasized, "the reaction of the international community, as it is expressed through the UN, must be explicit:

--Immediate ceasefire.
--Immediate and unconditional release of captive soldiers.
--Immediate disarmament of paramilitary organizations.
--Full and speedy restoration of the sovereignty of the Lebanese Government throughout Lebanon 4e2RiQo29.Q
--Protection to noncombatants wh) sish t/ depaRt the areas of the c2i3iq&Q
--%I&t%Rb!ti%fal assistance for the co6er!g% gb huea.i4!rian needs."

¶3. (U) Th% PM !dded Qha4 CREEce is ready to actir%19 a*\$Q sQb3Ta&Tial\$y contribute to the "fe!e3Qa2I !ctik&Q" o& The international come5fit9, 3)t(t(e lcle objectives being the quick defusing of the dangerous crisis, and the restoration of peace in the region. He continued, "In the last few days in Lebanon and Israel, the use of violence has struck the highest rights -- human life and human dignity." He said that the violence is testing the conscience, principles and values of the international community, exhausting the limits of international legality and international law, enlarging the problems and impasses, and attacking the stability and peace of the region.

FM CALLS FOR CEASEFIRE

¶4. (U) FM Dora Bakoyannis on July 18 called for the crisis to be "controlled soon." She said, "the deterioration of the situation in Lebanon, with the abductions of Israeli soldiers, the excessive escalation of military operations and

the continuous Hizballah activity, hurts civilians and their infrastructure on both sides. Human life has exactly the same value in Haifa as in Beirut." Bakoyannis stressed that she wants a "clearer" message from the EU on an immediate ceasefire, but was interested in safeguarding unity in both the EU and UN.

MORE PROTESTS AND PROTESTERS AT US AND ISRAELI EMBASSIES

¶15. (SBU) There have been a series of peaceful demonstrations over the past week at the US and Israeli embassies. Attendance has steadily risen from approximately 200 protesters gathering last week (reftel) to an expected 1000-1200 July 20. Another demonstration is planned for July ¶125. The Hellenic National Police (HNP) have provided anti-riot buses in front of the embassy, and anti-riot police officers on foot have escorted protesters along the route. So far, no damage or injuries have been reported in any of the protests.

¶16. (SBU) COMMENT: While the GoG statements reflect the July 17 "Conclusions on the Middle East" of the EU External Relations Council, the FM made it clear that she is looking for an even clearer statement from the international community for an immediate ceasefire. It is not surprising that protests at the embassy are growing steadily larger, since press reports in Greece hardly mention Hizballah's actions and focusing instead on "atrocities" committed by Israel. We expect the GoG to continue to openly share their positions both with the press and with us, and expect the GoG to continue unequivocal calls for a cessation to all attacks.

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